

Why the Institutional Church is Dying?

Recently I read a report on the Internet and it has been picked up and run by several sites wanting to capture their reader's attention. Interesting to me is the fact the article was written by Michael Snyder, the host of the web site "The Economic Collapse". Michael Snyder a couple years ago wrote a book, *'The Rapture Verdict'*. His book is one of the many reasons for the dying church in the world today. I'll explain further down in this article what I mean by that statement.

But first let me share the content of Mr. Snyder's article on his web site. This was the headline: **"Between 6,000 and 10,000 churches in the U.S. are dying each year" – and that means that over 100 will die this week.** The article was re-posted November 28, 2018 at IWB, an investor blog site.



America is littered with thousands of church buildings that aren't being used anymore. As you will see below, between 6,000 and 10,000 churches are dying in the United States every single year, and that means that more than 100 will die this week alone. And of course thousands of others are on life support. All over the country this weekend, small handfuls of people will gather in huge buildings which once boasted very large congregations. At one time, America was widely considered to be "a Christian nation", but that really isn't true anymore. As [an excellent article in *The Atlantic* has noted](#), even though most

Americans still consider themselves to be “Christian”, the numbers are telling us a very different story...

Many of our nation’s churches can no longer afford to maintain their structures—6,000 to 10,000 churches die each year in America—and that number will likely grow. Though more than 70 percent of our citizens still claim to be Christian, congregational participation is less central to many Americans’ faith than it once was. Most denominations are declining as a share of the overall population, and donations to congregations have been falling for decades. Meanwhile, religiously unaffiliated Americans, nicknamed the “nones,” are growing as a share of the U.S. population.

In fact, the “nones” have risen from just 6-percent of the population in 1991 to 25-percent today. That makes them the single largest “religious group” in the United States.

Today, less than 20 percent of all Americans attend church on a regular basis. As a result, churches are dying in very large numbers, and this is a trend that appears to be accelerating. According to Thom S. Rainer of Lifeway, when you break the numbers down it means that “around 100-200 churches will close this week”...

Between 6,000 and 10,000 churches in the U.S. are dying each year. **That means around 100-200 churches will close this week.** The pace will accelerate unless our congregations make some dramatic changes.

Any institution needs resources in order to survive, and churches are not any different. As attendance has declined, so has giving, and at this point the percentage of charity donations going to religious institutions is at an all-time low...

Religious institutions are still the single biggest recipients of overall charity donations, according to the 2015 survey by the Giving USA Foundation. About 32 percent — \$119.3 billion — of a total of \$373.25 billion Americans gave to charities went to churches, synagogues, mosques and temples.

But that is down from about 50 percent since 1990, according to Rick Dunham, vice chairman of Giving USA, and the percentage has been **“in steady decline for some time.”** So when churches die, what happens to their buildings?

Well, some are torn down, some are renovated for residential or business purposes, and some are being put to other uses...

A large number of abandoned churches **have become wineries or breweries or bars.** Others have been converted into **hotels, bed-and-breakfasts, and Airbnbs.** A few have been transformed into entertainment venues, such as an indoor playground for children, a laser-tag arena, or a skate park. [An **Airbnbs** means a social meeting venue].

A similar thing is happening in Europe, only on a much greater scale. Over there, hundreds of churches have been transformed into Islamic mosques, and this has generated quite a bit of controversy.

As I discussed in my article about demographic trends, we are witnessing societal change happen at a pace that would have been absolutely unthinkable a couple of generations ago. This is especially true for our young people. If you go back to 1986, just 10 percent of all young adults were “religiously unaffiliated”, but now that number has jumped all the way to 39 percent...

Today, nearly four in ten (39%) young adults (ages 18-29) are religiously unaffiliated— three times the unaffiliated rate (13%) among seniors (ages 65 and older). While previous generations were also more likely to be religiously unaffiliated in their twenties, young adults today are nearly four times as likely as young adults a generation ago to identify as religiously unaffiliated. **In 1986, for example, only 10% of young adults claimed no religious affiliation.**

That makes young adults the single largest group of “nones” in the entire country. We are living at a time when there is a mass exodus from the Christian faith in America, and it is likely going to take something quite dramatic to reverse that trend.

According to the Pew Research Center, Millennials are about half as likely to attend religious services on a weekly basis as the oldest Americans are.

Church attendance is simply not as important to Americans as it once was. In the old days, churches were central hubs where you got to know your neighbors and important events were commemorated. But now churches sit idle and empty most of the time, and attendance on Sunday mornings is depressingly low in most cases.

When I was growing up, my parents made sure that we were in church on Sunday morning, Sunday evening and sometimes even on Wednesday evening. But today, most churches don’t even have Sunday evening or midweek services because nobody would show up.

Our entire society, including our system of government, was birthed out of a culture of Bible-believing Christians. The following comes from an excellent piece by Dr. Mark David Hall...

In 1776, every European American, with the exception of about 2,500 Jews, identified himself or herself as a Christian. Moreover, **approximately 98 percent of the colonists were Protestants, with the remaining 1.9 percent being Roman Catholics.**

Not only did early Americans identify themselves as Christians, but nearly all of them regularly attended church.

Now our society is moving very rapidly in the exact opposite direction, and many believe that this has tremendous implications for the future of our nation.

This concludes Michael Schneider's news story and while somewhat revealing, it fails to identify the reasons for churches closing their doors. His implication is that cultural factors are the cause of church attendance decline. I would like to suggest to the reader that Jesus even Luke 18:8 says, **"...Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?"** This verse is prophetic as to the present time and predicts that many would fall away. I suggest to you that 2nd Thessalonians 2:3, contains a dual prophecy when it speaks about **"a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition;"** as six English translations previous to the King James Bible translated "a falling away" as "departure".

Permit me to suggest a few of the reasons why the Institutional Church is dying. But before doing that, I would like to comment about the author of the preceding commentary. Michael Schneider has written a few books, but one in particular got my attention back in March of 2015. I ordered Mr. Schneider's book, *'The Rapture Verdict'*, and in a few weeks Amazon sent me an e-mail, asking me to review my purchase. I did a lengthy review (a negative one at that); I gave it a one-star for lack of anything more negative. The sale of the book must have done poorly, as after a year and a half, my negative review was removed from the lead position of negative reviews, and buried several pages deep in the long list of negative reviews. If it proved nothing, it at least revealed the bias of Amazon ratings.

Michael Schneider is an attorney, he ran for congress in Idaho before dropping out of the race for the lack of funds needed to get elected in today's world. But Michael Schneider, in his own words says, *"When I was growing up, my parents made sure that we were in church on Sunday morning, Sunday evening and sometimes even on Wednesday evening."* From his book he refuted, or attempted to refute, the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of the church, and tried to make a case that the church will go through the Tribulation to the very end. My review, solicited by Amazon.com was at least three pages long, and it offered evidence disproving the thesis of his book. I listed so many reasons why the author was wrong and a disaster in addressing Biblical Eschatology [last things], and I could have given dozens more points why his book was a disaster. Amazon asks for a title for reviews and I gave my review title as - *"The Rapture Verdict: Case Dismissed"*.

Michael Schneider certainly did not learn much about the Bible, and most likely because he went to a church that followed Covenant/Reformed Theology and not Dispensational Theology, which "Rightly Divides the Word of God" according to 2nd Timothy 2:15. The likes of Martin Luther and John Calvin never intended to leave the Roman Catholic Church; they were excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church, thus forcing them to start their own denominations.

Unfortunately, the Reformation was a "still-born" child. By that I am saying they brought forth into their own churches errant beliefs and teachings that were not Biblical. Luther posted 95 theses or reasons for his claims against Rome. Most of you could not name a

single one of them beyond the issue of “justification by faith”. If you care to learn more about what took place in 1517 and the years following get a copy of Dr. Andy Woods’ new book, *‘Ever Reforming’*. Dr. Woods was a practicing attorney, who later went to Dallas Theological Seminary and earned another doctorate degree in Biblical Studies, and along with his education in the law became a major torch-bearer in understanding that the whole Bible is for our edification and learning, but not all of it was written specifically to the church today. The specific books of the Bible written to the “church” are the Apostle Paul’s epistles from Romans to Philemon.

For your information, the New Testament, technically speaking, does not begin until the event of the Cross. Most of you were taught the New Testament began with the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The larger part of these four books are really Old Testament history. The books from Hebrews through Revelation are written specifically to the Jews living in the Tribulation period, also known as Daniel’s 70th Week.

The problem for Michael Schneider and those always wanting to debunk the Pre-Tribulation Rapture, for the most part, have little or no theological education, are not fluent in the Biblical languages, know virtually nothing about church history, and have been the victims of Roman Catholic heresy and Covenant/Reformed Theology. Virtually most Christians have bought into the dominant theological belief system today known as Covenant or Reformed Theology. Michael Schneider’s book did get him appearances on the Jim Bakker television program “Morningside”, where he did several programs teaching the book of Revelation and his belief that the church will go through the Tribulation. If you follow Jim Bakker, you are being deceived by someone that doesn’t operate by 2nd Timothy 2:15 or Acts 17:11.

God gave the Apostle Paul a key lesson, which is found in 2nd Timothy 2:15: ***“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”*** “Study” here is much broader than the meaning of the word as it relates to book learning. It means “be eager, be zealous, be diligent, make every effort, do your utmost.” Timothy was to do his best to “show” (*parastēsai*, “present oneself for service”) himself “approved” (*dokimon*, “accepted after testing”) unto God. This presentation to God involves two aspects: (1) a worker who is not ashamed (the Greek word used here has a passive force: “not to be put to shame,” cf. Philippians 1:20) and (2) a worker who can rightly divide or correctly handle the truth. “Rightly dividing” (*orthotomounta*) is literally “straight cutting.” The possible metaphor behind this phrase is the farmer who plows a straight furrow or the road builder who cuts a road across country in a straight direction. Timothy was to be a person who goes straight ahead, not veering to the right or to the left.

Another meaning is “correctly handling” and refers to Timothy’s call to the correct exegesis of God’s Word. He must not twist or change the truth. “The word of truth” refers to the “gospel.” Paul also used this phrase in Ephesians 1:13 and Colossians 1:5. I repeat my point here that not everything written in the Bible is directed to you and I. Yes, it is God’s Word, but it covers roughly 6,000 years, plus the Millennium, a period of 1,000 years, just ahead, where Christ Jesus rules and reigns.

The early church believed that the Lord Christ Jesus would return in their life time. For the first two hundred years or so the church believed in a Millennial reign, with the Lord present here on Earth. Revelation 20 makes reference to the Millennial period of "One" Thousand years, not once but "six" **6X** times. The Greek word is very specific in its meaning precisely a 1,000 year period. Revelation 20:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 use the same Greek word "six" times: "**chilioi**" is the operative period of time. The Greek and Hebrew are more precise than English, and if God intended us to take this to mean simply a long time, there are other words that would have done the job, but His Word emphasized this point sufficient for us to know what He meant. This is further stressed in Acts 17:11: "**These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.**"

Now to the larger issue of this article, the dying of churches at the rate of a hundred a week or a number close to that. I've been in various types of ministry 54 years, most of that as a Methodist pastor. The Methodist Church, now the United Methodist Church, is one of the seven "main line" Protestant churches (daughter churches) that came out of the Reformation. The United Methodist Church is today a liberal denomination as are most of the other "main line" churches. This is a factor in why the "institutional" church is dying. It, for all intent and purpose, is very close to the Roman Catholic Institution. It has been engaged in "unity" talks for many years with the Vatican. My point here is to note the United Methodist Church today does believe the Bible is the Word of God. It does not believe in or teach the Pre-Tribulation Rapture. I am somewhat unique in a way as I attended and graduated from four academic theological institutions which are all adherents of Covenant/Reformed Theology. Being educated in some very fine academic institutions does not justify or provide reason to hold their Covenant/Reformed theological position. In twelve years of higher education, I saw many inconsistencies and incongruent interpretation of the Bible. All of these supposed conflicts in the Bible actually are reconciled through Dispensationalism.

I am a Dispensationalist, and was one long before I learned what the term meant! How do we define what Dispensationalism is? There are four or five very basic tenets of this school of theology.

Dispensationalism maintains:

1. A fundamental distinction between Israel and the church, i.e. there are two peoples of God with two different destinies, earthly Israel and the spiritual church,
2. A fundamental distinction between the Law and Grace, i.e. they are mutually exclusive ideas,
3. The view that the New Testament church is a parenthesis in God's plan which was not foreseen by the Old Testament, and
4. A distinction between the Rapture and the Second Coming of Christ, i.e. the rapture of the church at Christ's coming "in the air" -(1st Thessalonians 4:17) precedes the "official" second coming (to the earth) by 7 years of tribulation.
5. God's focus of the Bible is to bring all honor and glory to Himself alone.

What is dispensationalism and is it biblical?

A dispensation is a way of ordering things—an administration, a system, or a management. In theology, a dispensation is the divine administration of a period of time; each dispensation is a divinely appointed age. Dispensationalism is a theological system that recognizes these ages ordained by God to order the affairs of the world. Dispensationalism has two primary distinctives: 1) a consistently literal interpretation of Scripture, especially Bible prophecy, and 2) a view of the uniqueness of Israel as separate from the Church in God’s program. Classical dispensationalism identifies seven dispensations in God’s plan for humanity.

Dispensationalists hold to a literal interpretation of the Bible as the best hermeneutic. The literal interpretation gives each word the meaning it would commonly have in everyday usage. Allowances are made for symbols, figures of speech, and types, of course. It is understood that even symbols and figurative sayings have literal meanings behind them. So, for example, when the Bible speaks of “a thousand years” in Revelation 20, dispensationalists interpret it as a literal period of 1,000 years (the dispensation of the Kingdom), since there is no compelling reason to interpret it otherwise.

There are at least two reasons why literalism is the best way to view Scripture. First, philosophically, the purpose of language itself requires that we interpret words literally. Language was given by God for the purpose of being able to communicate. Words are vessels of meaning. The second reason is biblical. Every prophecy about Jesus Christ in the Old Testament was fulfilled literally. Jesus’ birth, ministry, death, and resurrection all occurred exactly as the Old Testament predicted. The prophecies were literal. There is no non-literal fulfillment of messianic prophecies in the New Testament. This argues strongly for the literal method. If a literal interpretation is not used in studying the Scriptures, there is no objective standard by which to understand the Bible. Each person would be able to interpret the Bible as he saw fit. Biblical interpretation would devolve into “what this passage says to me” instead of “the Bible says.” Sadly, this is already the case in much of what is called Bible study today.

Dispensational theology teaches that there are two distinct peoples of God: Israel and the Church. Dispensationalists believe that salvation has always been by grace through faith alone—in God in the Old Testament and specifically in God the Son in the New Testament. Dispensationalists hold that the Church has not replaced Israel in God’s program and that the Old Testament promises to Israel have not been transferred to the Church. Dispensationalism teaches that the promises God made to Israel in the Old Testament (for land, many descendants, and blessings) will be ultimately fulfilled in the 1000-year period spoken of in Revelation 20. Dispensationalists believe that, just as God is in this age focusing His attention on the Church, He will again in the future focus His attention on Israel (see Romans 9–11 and Daniel 9:24).

Dispensationalists understand the Bible to be organized into seven dispensations: **Innocence** (Genesis 1:1—3:7), **Conscience** (Genesis 3:8—8:22), **Human Government** (Genesis 9:1—11:32), **Promise** (Genesis 12:1—Exodus 19:25), **Law** (Exodus 20:1—Acts 2:4), **Grace** (Acts

2:4—Revelation 20:3), and the **Millennial Kingdom** -(Revelation 20:4–6). Again, these dispensations are not paths to salvation, but manners in which God relates to man. Each dispensation includes a recognizable pattern of how God worked with people living in the dispensation. That pattern is revealed in: 1) a responsibility, 2) a failure, 3) a judgment, and 4) grace to move on.

Dispensationalism, as a system, results in a Premillennial interpretation of Christ's second coming and usually a Pretribulational interpretation of the Rapture. To summarize, dispensationalism is a theological system that emphasizes the literal interpretation of Bible prophecy, recognizes a distinction between Israel and the Church, and organizes the Bible into different dispensations or administrations. Dispensationalism reconciles many Biblical questions that Covert/Reformed theology cannot explain or resolve to our satisfaction.

I would submit to the reader the major reason a hundred churches today are closing their doors would be related to they were likely of the Covenant/Reformed Theological belief. This is not the only reason though, and I would say demographics is a major reason. People move for various reasons: employment, the neighborhood changes, and loss of employment from jobs that were exported to Mexico, China, and elsewhere. An element that Michael Schneider has overlooked is the fact that the main line Protestant churches years ago abandoned evangelism and missionary work at home. For many churches they have lost their purpose for existing. Those churches are no longer motivated to spread the Gospel or "Good News" of Jesus Christ to their neighbors. In the past five years, I have had visitors (Roman Catholic, Jehovah Witnesses, and Mormons) coming to my door wanting to teach me about the Bible.

About the same time Protestant churches abandoned evangelism, the Vatican began to go the other way, actually implementing and doing neighborhood evangelism. Another significant reason is these main line Protestant denominations were virtually "silent" during the 1960's and 1970's over issues that cost the church their voice of moral authority! With the Supreme Court decisions handed down beginning on June 25, 1962 and up until June 26, 2015, have all but destroyed the community church not rooted in "***The Blessed Hope***". Make no mistake about it, once the Institutional Church abdicated to the stacked-deck of a, Freemasonic anti-Christian Supreme Court, it sacrificed its "Voice" of Moral Authority, and the church has been in numerical decline ever since. The primary exception to declining denominational churches is that of denominations grounded in Dispensationalism, looking forward to "***The Blessed Hope!***"

The main line Protestant churches do not teach prophecy, and therefore failed to offer "Hope" to carry them through the closing days of the "church age" or "age of grace". This is not to say that there are some, but few, by comparison that teach Biblical prophecy. One of my seminary classmates pastors the largest United Methodist Church in Mississippi. They recently withdrew from the UMC connectional system last year, taking their main campus plus four or five branch campus facilities. The UMC is the last of the main line Protestant Churches that has not capitulated to the "sodomite" agenda, and in the next few months we will know if the UMC

faces a split. Indicators are that the denomination will incur a split over “same-sex” marriage and ordination of homosexuals. The denomination is very liberal with the exception of certain areas of the United States, and most of the United Methodist Churches throughout the world. Dissenting conservative pastors and churches are seeking a path whereby a church can exit the denomination without having to buy back their property in the process. Traditionally, when a UMC church wishes to break connection it has had to buy back its property, and at considerable cost.

Let me insert from experience, even a liberal church can grow. As somewhat of a “rebel” in the United Methodist Church, and a graduate of Biblical conservative Asbury Theological Seminary, it is not unusual for “Asbury” grads being assigned to rural and urban churches in decline, sort of a punishment for being a Bible believer thumper. Eventually, conference leaders recognize the fact that Asbury grads know how to let God build a church, and get appointed to larger churches. In my ministry, every church I was appointed to grew numerically, financially, and spiritually, but for one. As a college student-pastor, I re-opened a rural country church on an unpaved road and in the two years I ran it as a mission church, it flourished. My predecessor closed it saying he did not get enough out for Sunday school and worship.

An axiom my Homiletics [preaching] professor used to quote daily, “Be Biblical, be Relevant, and be Clear”. If you are not Biblical, you will lose your people, to politics, to social causes, and to irrelevant subjects, at a time when they are looking to their pastor for spiritual understanding, guidance, and direction from God about their world they live in.

Those denominations that are rooted in Dispensational Theology, they are strong in ways not found in the main line Protestant churches. Denominations that are grounded in Dispensationalism, like the Baptists, Christian Missionary Alliance, Evangelical Free Church, Calvary Chapel, Assemblies of God, and many smaller independent Bible and community churches are growing and winning the lost to Christ. You see, when you give people “Hope” there is a reason for attending churches. With the liberal churches focused on social justice and political issues, there is little or no reason to attend. They can see all of that they want in the nightly news propaganda!

Decades ago I wonder why many ministers were so silent on teaching Bible prophecy from their pulpits, particularly when at least 28 percent of the Bible was prophetic at the time it was written.

Dr. John Walvoord, the great prophecy scholar, identified more than 1,000 prophecies in his book *‘The Bible Prophecy Handbook’*. Of those prophecies, more than half have literally been fulfilled, assuring us that the other half is end-time prophecies that will also be fulfilled literally. These fulfilled prophecies should make it easy to believe that we are living in or very near what the Bible calls "the latter days" and "the end times."

Among the many fulfilled end-time signs, none is more obvious than the very existence of the Jewish people now living in their own homeland, having been driven or voluntarily migrated there from more than 170 nations of the world during the last 125 or so years.

Anyone familiar with this greatest end-time prediction recognizes what Jesus Christ meant in the Olivet Discourse when He said, "**Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: When its branch becomes tender and grows leaves, you know that summer is near**" -(Matthew 24:32). The fig tree represents the nation of Israel. In other words, when the Jewish people begin to gather back into their land, you will know the sign of His return and the end is "near."

Today, many of the main line Protestant denominations have imposed the "BDS" (boycott, divest, and sanction) policy against Israel and Israeli businesses. Not a good thing to be doing in my opinion. They have bought into the errant idea God was through with Israel. This came as a result of Catholic bishop Augustine of Hippo, North Africa in the fourth century A.D. Why do you suppose the news daily reports on what is happening in and to Israel?

Many prophecy scholars consider the Olivet Discourse as the most important end-time prophecy in the New Testament. Personally, I believe it indicates that between the Islamic terrorism of the Middle East and many other signs of the end, we may be near what I call "the end of the end times." The tragedy is that many of our church pulpits are nearly silent on the subject, and when they say much it is usually negative. We are told explicitly to "**Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.**" -(Psalm 122:6).

As an evangelistic Bible-teaching pastor, I find there is nothing more inspiring to evangelism and spiritual growth than preaching on Bible prophecy and the certainty of Jesus' Second Coming. (It is the only source of hope and comfort for people living at a time when secular man has so obviously proven himself incapable of coping with the chaos that is exploding in much of our world, particularly in and around Israel).

Yet the amazing thing is that here we are, living in a time when God has revealed much of His wonderful plans for our future eternal life in His Word, yet many pulpits remain silent about this comforting truth that is so obvious by studying fulfilled prophecy. Why? I believe there to be several reasons. Consider some of the following:

1) A minister does not take the Bible literally, as God intended. Most mainline Protestant and Reformed churches do not take the Bible literally. Whenever you spiritualize or allegorize God's meaning, you make it all but unintelligible. Instead, those who do not take the Bible literally often ridicule those of us who do, accusing us of a "wooden, literal interpretation of Scripture." We believe that God said what He meant when He spoke through His Holy Spirit to special prophets and apostles, yet we also should understand what He meant to their generation and make a common-sense application to our own. Language has a way of changing through the years. After 300 years, it is difficult to understand Chaucer and Shakespeare in their original language. Parts of the Bible were written more than 3,000 years ago. We are fortunate today to

have many modern translations and study Bibles in which Bible scholars have properly interpreted the modern equivalent to the ancient Scriptures.

We also believe there are many passages that include symbols, metaphors and figures of speech that must be considered in light of their original context to assure that we have exactly the original meaning. Typology is woven throughout the Scriptures as a way unifying the 66 books of the Bible. In my eBook *'The Inspired Word of God: Mathematically Proven True'* I have shown that God is a Master Mathematician, and self-authenticates Divine Authorship in such a way to negate that our King James Bible is not of man! The Scriptures contain what I dubbed as the "Heptadic Design Feature". The mathematical properties of *Pi* π , *Phi* ϕ , and *Euler* are all encoded in important key verses.

2) A minister takes the Bible literally, except the 28 percent that is prophetic. Many otherwise evangelical churches have adopted the strange idea, propounded by Augustine in the late fourth century A.D. that the Bible should be taken literally except for the prophetic passages. Thus, they avoid teaching prophecy even amid the many signs that exist in our modern era that are obvious signs of the end. One such sign is the miraculous return of the nation of Israel to the Holy Land in our own generation. Israel's very existence 4,000 years after Father Abraham started the Hebrew people, even as many other nations have sunk beneath the sands of time, is itself a miracle. However, today, Israel exists and occupies the daily news on TV, radio and the media worldwide, exactly as the prophets and apostles predicted for the last days.

3) A minister receives his education from secular educators. Too many seminaries and even Christian colleges have employed professors and teachers on the merit of earned "accredited graduate degrees" from secular colleges and universities, where the core educational program either was secular and hostile to God and the Bible, or simply ignored them altogether. Many of these professors ridicule those who would teach the divine nature of the Bible, particularly that of future prophecy.

Dr. Howard Hendricks propagated a very important educational principle: "You cannot impart what you do not possess." The ugly fact is many of our pastors silent on prophecy don't deal with the subject because they know so little about it. Educators who had pastoral experience themselves did not plan their curriculum, but they had "accredited graduate degrees." That might help their university or seminary get accreditation from the regional accrediting association, but it also means pastors are not trained to "preach the Word" as the apostles Paul, Peter, James and others admonished. It would be better for churches everywhere if seminaries found experienced men with two or three decades of successful pastoral experience to teach the next generation how to pastor and preach the Word of God.

4) A minister is not willing to do the hard work of studying God's Word. I know firsthand that it takes hard work, and study is hard work. That requires a pastor with strong self-discipline in studying the Bible so he can impart a well-thought-out biblically based message in the fire of the Holy Spirit. I understand the need to minister to the many needy souls in the congregation, plus church personnel and other unexpected problems that arise for every pastor. However,

when it comes to preaching, I shall never forget the advice of my first District Superintendent, Jim Geiser. He said to me, "Bob, never go into the pulpit unprepared." Tear off big chunks of beefsteak from the Word of God and feed it to your people and be evangelistic." With God's help, I have tried to follow that advice.

The importance of sermon preparation was graphically illustrated to me one night after doing a presentation at a Baptist church on the hidden gems of the Bible. At the close one of those there to hear my presentation said his pastor never taught these things privately to me that night. He blurted out, *"My pastor never studies enough to minister to the needs of our congregation. Every week I go to church after rubbing shoulders with many needy people with the prayer, 'Oh, man of God, I need to hear a message from God today to inspire me to be a spiritual blessing in this mixed-up world of ours.' But my pastor doesn't study the Word enough to give us a powerful message from God."* I would later learn the pastor didn't last long at that church. You see, it's about giving folks hope!

To be honest, that conversation went straight to my heart as I often examined my own study habits. Busy husbands and fathers have every right to expect a soul-stimulating message so they can be spiritually encouraged by learning biblical truths when they attend our services. That cannot be done unless the pastor carefully studies his Bible before he steps into the pulpit. It is true that while we are commissioned to preach the whole counsel of God, nothing is more inspiring than preaching on some of the many promises of Jesus' soon coming. For it is what the apostle Paul called *"the blessed hope"* -(Titus 2:13), and at least twice wrote that we can "comfort one another with these words" -(1st Thessalonians 4:18).

5) A minister is not willing to be an avid reader. A good preacher must be an avid reader. The apostle Paul advised the young preacher Timothy, his son in the faith, to give attention to reading so he could make good use of his preaching gift and be a good example for the believers -(1st Timothy 4:9-16). That pastoral advice from the well-traveled church builder and experienced apostle Paul is very appropriate for all pastors today.

While it is important that we read extensively today, it is doubly important for pastors and teachers to not only read the writings of Spirit-filled men but more importantly, God's Word. If you read the Bible regularly and memorize those passages that particularly speak to you, or those that answer specific questions you might have, the Holy Spirit can bring them to your remembrance when you need them most. When I lost full control of my legs, I had acquired over 6,200 books in my personal library. I donated around 5,500 books to a Bible college where I had taught for time, and it was painful to part with my tools of my library.

6) A minister is misguided by charlatans, zealots and date setters. Another reason pulpits are often silent on prophecy is because of the abuse by some charlatans, misguided zealots and even founders of well-known false cults. Many of these have disregarded true prophecy teaching by setting dates that proved to be untrue and was forbidden by our Lord and His apostles outright. This is even more reason why pulpits should be used to teach the truth about the end times and future prophecy, so Christians won't be deceived as we approach the Lord's

coming and the end of the age. My home church pastor who had graduated from a liberal United Methodist seminary, Sunday after Sunday, would bore the congregation into a comatose stupor with some nonsense messages on baseball unrelated to the Bible. One of his friends was a former Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher with a lifeless message and filled in when the pastor was on vacation.

7) A minister believes people are not interested in Bible prophecy. Some pastors believe the false idea that Christians are not interested in Bible prophecy. That notion may have been popular after World War II when peace came to the world for a short while, but that is long gone. We are living when **"wars and rumors of wars"** are on almost everyone's mind - (Matthew 24:6). It doesn't look like peace in our lifetime is close to being on the horizon any time soon. In addition, rogue nations now have the atomic and neutron bombs, and Iran is rapidly on the march to get both of them and a delivery system that could reach the whole world in the next decade—hardly the stuff that promotes a good night's sleep.

Actually, the notion that people are not interested in Bible prophecy is a tool of Satan to lull the church and evangelistic-minded Christians to sleep. Nothing energizes the body of Christ to soul-winning evangelism like teaching about the soon coming of Christ and the end of the age.

For example, one of the prime reasons we know that Jesus is the one and only Messiah sent by God to this world is because He fulfilled more than 109 prophecies of the Old Testament during His brief 33 years of life here. No other person even comes close to that kind of fulfillment. Yet Bible scholars tell us there are 321 prophecies of His Second Coming to rapture His church before the seven-year Tribulation and the setting up of His 1,000-year millennial kingdom. Since we know His first coming is a historical fact, we can be confident that His Second Coming will be true too. I personally know many pastors of growing churches and megachurches throughout this country. It is not surprising to me that many of them preach often on Bible prophecy. People are eager to hear about the end times and what God has to say about it. People are hungry for anything that can help people place and relate to where we are in terms of Biblical prophecy. God considered prophecy so important that He focused 28% of it on His return!

Not so surprising is the fact that the one Bible book many pastors never teach because they were taught in seminary that *"it is too difficult for God's people to understand,"* or even worse, *"church people are not interested in prophecy."* I think both excuses are a lie from the devil himself.

Preaching fulfilled prophecy proves God's faithfulness to His people in the past. Future end-time prophecies teach us about the wonderful plan He has for our incredible future. I trust you attend a church where your pastor preaches on Bible prophecy. After all, the apostle Paul called it **"the blessed hope."** If you hear it in your church, read about it in your Bible, study it like the Bereans in the early church, memorize it and meditate on it, the apostle John and our Lord promised you a "blessing": **"Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written in it, for the time is near"** -(Revelation 1:3).

Prophecy has an important practical purpose. Here is a short list of examples of what I am referring to and why it will bring a congregation back to life and passion:

1. Prophecy is a part of Scripture - (2nd Peter 1:19-21; Revelation 1:3; 22:16-19).
2. Prophecy is a proof of the truthfulness of Scripture - (Isaiah 41:21-29; 42:9; 44:7;-8, 24-45:7; 46:8-11; 2nd Peter 3:4-13).
3. Prophecy presents a proper view of our age – (1st Corinthians 7:31; Ephesians 5:16; 1st Timothy 3:1-5; 1st John 2:18).
4. Prophecy provides comfort in our sorrows – (1st Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1st Peter 1:7-9).
5. Prophecy proves God is in control – (Daniel 9:27; Acts 4:25-29; Philippians 1:6).
6. Prophecy produces spiritual stability – (1st Corinthians 15:58; 2nd Thessalonians 2:2).
7. Prophecy promotes evangelism - (Acts 3:18-24; Hebrews 9:26-27).
8. Prophecy promotes spiritual purity - (Philippians 4:5; 1st Thessalonians 3:13; 5:23; Titus 2:12-13; James 5:7-9; 1st Peter 1:3-7; 2nd Peter 3:11-12; 1st John 3:3).
9. Prophecy procures moral and social responsibility – (Romans 13:11-14; 1st Thessalonians 5:6-11).
10. Prophecy presents a prepared student of Scripture – (2nd Timothy 2:15; 1st Peter 1:10-12; 2nd Peter 3:16).
11. Prophecy provokes a sincere love for Christ Jesus – (2nd Timothy 4:8; 1st Peter 1:8).

In between writing articles I am in the process of cleaning out files and disposing of articles, items, papers, records, etc.; things that my family will not have to deal with after my passing should I go home before the Rapture. There was a time when I had as many as ten 4-drawer steel file cabinets. They were crammed full of my life collection of resources. When we moved to a new church appointment, we needed two 24-ft. Ryder rental trucks, one for household belongings, and one for my pastor's library. At 81 years of age one does not think about saving or keeping too much, if you catch my drift. I have been going through my seminary days files. Yes, I kept all my college and seminary files. I had a file folder for every course I took in twelve years of education. A few weeks ago I was cleaning out a file drawer and I came across a class handout, it was titled "40 motivating aspects of the second coming of Christ". Few of you would know the name William E. Blackstone.

Blackstone was born in Adams, New York and became an evangelical Christian when he was 11 years of age during revival meetings at a local Methodist church. He enlisted for military service during the American Civil War but was not accepted due to "frailness of body". Instead he joined the United States Christian Commission (similar to the modern Red Cross) and was stationed much of the time at General Ulysses S. Grant's headquarters as coordinator of medical services for injured combatants.

On June 5, 1866, Blackstone married Sarah Lee Smith (daughter of Philander Smith) and settled in Oak Park, Illinois in 1870, where he very successfully engaged in the "business of building and property investments". Blackstone, in a single night of personal spiritual struggle, decided to dedicate his life to God. Renouncing material pursuits, he proclaimed for the balance of his long life, in his preaching as well as in his writing, the premillennial return and rapture of

the Church. As he ministered across the U.S., Blackstone spoke with increasing fervor in support of Jewish restorationism.

In 1878, he wrote, *'Jesus is Coming'*. His book became the veritable reference source of American dispensationalist thought. Over the next 50 years, *'Jesus is Coming'* sold multi-millions of copies worldwide and was translated into 48 languages.

He initially focused on the restoration of the Jews to the Holy Land as a prelude to their conversion to Christianity, out of a pious wish to hasten the coming of the Messiah; but he increasingly became concerned with the deadly, Russian, government-instigated pogroms and believed that it was necessary to create a Jewish homeland in Israel. He was, furthermore, persuaded that neither the European nations nor the United States would accept as many Jews as needed to escape from Europe.

Blackstone and his daughter traveled to the Holy Land in 1888. He returned convinced that a return of the Jewish people to its ancient homeland was the only possible solution to the persecution Jews suffered elsewhere. On November 24–25, 1890, Blackstone organized the Conference on the Past, Present and Future of Israel at the First Methodist Episcopal Church in Chicago where participants included leaders of both Jewish and Christian communities, albeit not leaders of the Reform movement.

The conference issued a call urging the great powers, including the Ottoman Empire, to return Israel to the Jews. Resolutions of sympathy for the oppressed Jews living in Russia were passed, but Blackstone was convinced that such resolutions – even though passed by prominent men – were insufficient. He advocated strongly for the voluntary resettlement of the Jewish people, suffering under virulent anti-Semitism, in Israel.

A year later in 1891, Blackstone led a petition drive that was approved by the conference. It was later known as the Blackstone Memorial. The memorial was signed by 413 prominent Christian and a few Jewish leaders in the United States. Blackstone personally gathered the signatures of men such as John D. Rockefeller, J.P. Morgan, Cyrus McCormick, senators, congressmen, religious leaders of all denominations, newspaper editors, the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and others for the "Blackstone Memorial." He presented the "Memorial" to President Harrison, March 1891, calling for American support of Jewish restoration to Israel. His petition presaged and paralleled the later ideas of Theodor Herzl, the founder of the State of Israel, whose establishment of modern Zionism was outlined in his book, *'Der Judenstaat'*, 1896.

I share this background of William Blackstone to show that once there were Methodists back then who believed in the Pretribulation Rapture and the Second Coming of Jesus Christ at a time when Satan was using the likes of heretics and Satanists Westcott & Hort, producing their new corrupt Critical Greek New Testament, which became the basis for all your modern English translations of the Bible after 1900 A.D.. Learning of the rise of the Zionist movement, led by Theodor Herzl, Blackstone became an outspoken and ardent supporter of Zionism. When

Herzlian Zionism considered the offer by the British government of an interim Jewish state in Uganda he campaigned against it. He sent to Herzl a personal Bible outlined with the specific Biblical references to Jewish restoration to Israel only. The Bible was said to have been prominently displayed on Herzl's desk for many years. It is no longer locatable.

In 1904, he began teaching that the world has already been evangelized, citing Acts 2:5, 8:4, Mark 16:20 and Colossians 1:23. As one of the most popular evangelists in the United States, he traveled extensively continuing to spread the gospel until his death 31 years later.

Blackstone remained committed to Jewish restoration and Zionism for the balance of his long life. As a believing Evangelical Christian, he witnessed the seeming fulfillment of biblical prophecy as the Jewish state came back to life after 1900 years. Blackstone died thirteen years before Israel was founded in 1948. Without Rev. Blackstone's lifelong efforts to build American political support and American prophetic understanding of dispensationalism and restorationism, American support for Zionism and the State of Israel might have been very different. Famous during his life, he slipped into historical obscurity.

Reverend Blackstone died on November 7, 1935. He was buried in a modest grave at the Forest Lawn Cemetery in Glendale, California. All his evangelical life, Blackstone described himself as "God's Little Errand Boy." That said, perhaps "God's Little Errand Boy" was one of those instrumental in the life of President Harry S. Truman, and his mother, since it was President Truman who recognized Israel as a State only moments after Israel declared Its independence on May 14, 1948.

Rev. William E. Blackstone made a list of 40 things the Second Coming of Jesus Christ should provoke us:

1. To watchfulness –(Matthew 24:42-44; 25:13; Revelation 16:15)
2. To self-control –(1st Thessalonians 5:2-6; 1st Peter 16:15)
3. To repentance –(Acts 3:19-21; Revelation 3:3)
4. To faithfulness –(Matthew 25:19-21; Luke 12:42-44)
5. Not to be ashamed of Christ –(Mark 8:38)
6. Against worldliness –(Matthew 16:26-27)
7. To moderation or mildness –(Philippians 4:5)
8. To patience –(Hebrews 10:36-37; James 5:7-8)
9. To mortification of fleshly lusts –(Colossians 3:3-5)
10. To sincerity –(Philippians 1:9-10)
11. To practical sanctification of the entire being –(1st Thessalonians 5:23)
12. To ministerial faithfulness –(2nd Timothy 4:1-2)
13. To induce obedience to the apostle's injunctions –(1st Timothy 6:13-14)
14. To pastoral diligence and purity –(1st Peter 5:2-4)
15. To purify ourselves –(1st John 3:2-3)
16. To abide in Christ –(1st John 2:28)
17. To endure manifold temptations and the severest trial of faith –(1st Peter 1:7)

18. To bear persecution for the sake of our Lord –(1st Peter 4:13)
19. To holy conversation and godliness –(2nd Peter 3:11-13)
20. To brotherly love –(1st Thessalonians 3:12-13)
21. To keep in mind our heavenly citizenship –(Philippines 3:20-21)
22. To love the second coming of Christ –(2nd Timothy 4:7-8)
23. To look for Him –(Hebrews 9:27-28)
24. To confidence that Christ will finish the work –(Philippians 1:6)
25. To hold fast the hope firm to the end –(Revelation 2:25; 3:11)
26. To separation from worldly lusts and to live godly –(Titus 2::11-13)
27. To watchfulness because of its suddenness –(Luke 17:24-30)
28. To guard against hasty judgment –(1st Corinthians 4:5)
29. To the hope of a rich reward –(Matthew 19:27-28)
30. To assure the disciples of a time of rejoicing –(2nd Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 2:16)
31. To comfort the apostles in view of Christ's departure from them –(John 14:3; Acts 1:11)
32. Practical faith in the second coming is a crowning grace and assurance of blamelessness in the day of the Lord –(1st Corinthians 1:4-8)
33. It is the principle event for which the believer waits –(1st Thessalonians 1:9-10)
34. It is declared to be the time of reckoning with the servants –(Matthew 25:19)
35. Of judgment for the living nations –(Matthew 25:31-46)
36. Of the resurrection of the saints –(1st Corinthians 15:23)
37. Of the manifestation of the saints –(2nd Corinthians 5:10; Colossians 3:4)
38. It is declared to be the source of consolation to those who sorrow over the dead who sleep in Jesus –(1st Thessalonians 4:14-18)
39. It is declared to be the time of tribulation to unbelievers –(2nd Thessalonians 1:7-9)
40. It is proclaimed every time the Lord's Supper is celebrated –(1st Corinthians 11:26)

Reformed theology teaches that all Bible prophecy, including the book of Revelation, has already been fulfilled, and that the mission of the Church is to build the Kingdom of God so that Jesus Christ can return. For this reason, many who have been indoctrinated in Reformed theology won't suspect there is anything wrong with their leaders partnering with globalists like Bill Gates who are working to bring in the Kingdom of the Antichrist. Today, the Roman Catholic Church and the seven mainline Protestant denominations are bedfellows of the globalist Antichrist kingdom builders, and their cunning devices to harness the resources and manpower of the Christian Church to create their New World Order.

The fatal outcome of this unholy alliance is foretold in Revelation 17 which the Reformed, unfortunately, do not recognize as end time prophecy. Nor will they know to heed the warning of God in Revelation 18:4: ***"Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues."*** May we take this warning seriously and pray for those who are in the deception of Calvinism, Reformed theology and other churches, organizations and movements that have embraced Dominionist / Kingdom Now theology.

Well you know now why a hundred churches are closing their doors weekly. In light of what I have shared it becomes evident why it will continue until the Lord sounds the Trumpet and call, ***“Come up hither”!***

Keep Looking Up!

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